

Catherine Harding
150 Yantic Street, #155
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8579 '99 AUG 27 A10:35

Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers La., Rm. 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

To Whom it May Concern:

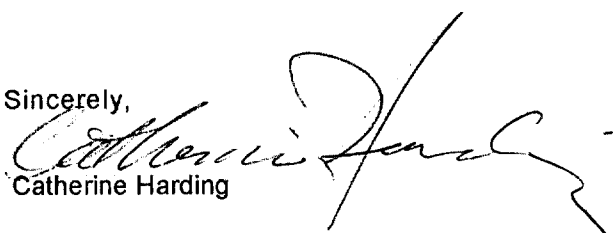
I am writing you regarding the issue of induced molting by the chicken industry. I refer to docket numbers 98N-1230, 96P-0418, and 97P-0197.

Every year, when egg production drops, approximately 195 million hens in North America endure a bizarre torment called forced molting. This cruel practice throws the hens' systems into collapse, stressing and shocking their worn-out bodies into laying one more batch of eggs before being sent to slaughter. The frightened birds are deprived of food for up to two weeks, water is restricted for up to eight weeks and they are kept in pitch dark for weeks on end. As a result, hundreds of thousands die while those who survive grow weak, shed all their feathers, and lose up to 35 percent of their body weight. Forced molting also weakens hens' bones, resulting in fragile, broken limbs.

Recent research, including a study conducted by U.S. government scientists, shows that forced molting can be harmful to humans as well. The studies show that forced molting increases the frequency and severity of *Salmonella enteritidis* among hens. The stressful conditions weaken their immune systems so badly that they become prone to disease and salmonella infections. The result is sick birds and contaminated eggs.

Clearly the most effective and direct way to reduce salmonella in eggs would be to eliminate the practice of forced molting. It is unhealthy and inhumane. In addition I urge that the FDA do more than put warning labels on egg cartons and regulate egg refrigeration temperatures.

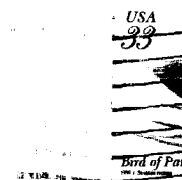
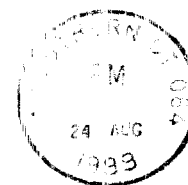
Sincerely,


Catherine Harding

98N-1230

C393

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20852/0003



CROSS FILE SHEET

File Number:

98N-1230/ C 393

See File Number:

97P-0197/ C 394

96P-0418/ C 393